

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12  
EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /087 W  
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R 202054Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9185  
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY MADRID  
AMEMBASSY LISBON  
USNMR SHAPE  
USMISSION USNATO  
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE  
DIA WASHDC  
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW  
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
USMISSION USBERLIN  
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX  
AMCONSUL LYON  
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE  
AMCONSUL NICE  
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 34750

USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, FR  
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SUBJECT: THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND THE PROCESS O  
"OPENING"

REF: PARIS 34436

SUMMARY. IN THE WAKE OF IMPRESSIVE SOCIALIST VICTORIES  
IN RECENT BY-ELECTIONS, HOPES FOR GISCARD'S "OPENING

TO THE LEFT" ARE LOWER NOW THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE MARCH 1978. OUR ANALYSIS OF THE PS INDICATES THAT THE PRTY IS NOT SERIOUSLY TEMPTED BY THE PROSPECTS OF A SOCIALIST-GISCARDIAN ALLIANCE AND HAS INSTEAD EMBARKED ON A STRATEGY OF AUTONOMOUS ACTION, PREMISED ON AN EVENTUAL PS/PCF GOVERNMENTAL COALITION. THIS STRATEGY IS SUPPORTED BY BOTH LEADING CONTENDERS FOR THE SOCIALIST PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY IN 1981, MITTERRAND AND ROCARD (DESPITE THEIR DIFFERENCES ON OTHER ISSUES), AS WELL S BY THE PS RANK-AND-FILE. THIS APPROACH STRESSES PS CREDIBILITY AS AN ALTERNATIVE IN POWER AND HENCE TRIES TO ENHANCE THE PARTY IMAGE OF INDEPENDENCE, RESPONSIBILITY AND SERIOUSNESS (PARTICULARLY ON ECONOMIC ISSUES). BUT NO PS LEADER SEES IT AS A PRELUDE TO A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC REORIENTATION, ESPECIALLY IN THE SENSE THAT THE CONCEPT IMPLIES A CENTER-LEFT GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PROCESS OF "OPENING": AS LONG-TIME OBSERVERS OF FRENCH POLITICS REALIZE, GISCARD'S "OPENING TO THE LEFT", SO MUCH BALLYHOOED AFTER THE MARCH 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, IS NOT AT ALL A NEW IDEA. HIS GOAL OF GOVERNING FRANCE FROM A REFORMIST, LIBERAL CENTER ENCOMPASSING MUCH OF THE SOCIALIST TERRAIN, OF PUSHING THE COMMUNISTS AND GAULLISTS TO THE EXTREME MARGINS OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, WAS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE IN 1974 AT THE TIME OF HIS ELECTION. ALTHOUGH BOOSTED MIGHTILY BY HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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BOOK FRENCH DEMOCRACY IN 1976, GISCARD'S DREAM OF "OPENING" WAS CONSIDERED UNREALISTIC BY MOST OBSERVERS, EVEN BY HIS OWN ADVISORS, UNTIL AFTER THE 1978 ELECTIONS WHEN THE PS WOULD BE FREED FROM ITS COMMON PROGRAM OBLIGATIONS TO THE PCF. THAT FALLING DUE HAS COME AND GONE AND NOW PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORS AND POLITICAL PUNDITS TALK OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST OF 1981 AS THE MAGIC MOMENT WHEN AT LEAST A PART OF THE PS, PROBABLY LED BY MICHEL ROCARD, MIGHT COME TUMBLING INTO THE MAJORITY CAMP.

2. OF COURSE, BUILDING A NEW, CENTER-ORIENTED MAJORITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PROCESS IN GISCARD'S EYES RATHER THAN A SPECIFIC POINT IN TIME. IN THAT SENSE, IT CAN NEVER "FAIL", BUT ONLY BE DELAYED UNTIL A LATER DATE. BUT WHILE VGE'S INITIATIVES IN THE POST-ELECTION PERIOD (CONSULTATIONS WITH OPPOSITION LEADERS, THE RECRUITMENT OF FORMER LEFT RADICAL LEADER ROBERT FABRE TO UNDERTAKE A SPECIAL STUDY ON UNEMPLOYMENT, ETC.) CANNOT BE LABELLED FAILURES, NEITHER DO THEY SEEM TO HAVE BROUGHT THE FRENCH PRESIDENT MUCH NEARER TO HIS LONG-TERM GOAL. IN FACT, WITH THE PROMISE OF DIRECT SOCIALIST-GISCARDIAN COMPETITION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS OF JUNE

1979, GISCARD SEEMS TO HAVE COOLED AT LEAST MOMENTARILY  
TOWARD MAJOR OVERTURES WHICH MIGHT LEND CREDIBILITY TO  
THE PS WHILE BLURRING A STILL-EMERGING UDF (HIS OWN  
POLITICAL MOVEMENT) IDENTITY.

3. A STRATEGY OF SOCIALIST AUTONOMY: IT SHOULD ALSO BE  
CLEAR TO GISCARD THAT RECEPTIVENESS ON THE PART OF THE  
SOCIALISTS IS NOT AT ALL LIKELY IN THE NEAR-TERM. FRESH

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 PARIS 34750

FROM RECENT BY-ELECTIONS IN WHICH THE PS TOPPED 33 PER-  
CENT AND BUOYED BY CURRENT POLLS SHOWING  
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THE PARTY AT 32 PERCENT, THE SOCIALISTS ARE WELL ON  
THEIR WAY TO ERASING THE SAD MEMORIES OF THE MARCH 1978  
DEFEAT. MORE IMPORTANTLY, A NEW PS STRATEGY OF AUTONO-  
MY IS EMERGING WHICH CONTINUES TO LABEL COLLABORATION  
WITH THE MAJORITY AS THE MOST MORTAL OF ALL SINS:

- THE PS MUST HENCEFORTH ACT WITH COMPLETE AU-  
TONOMY, WORKING ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE  
NON-COMMUNIST LEFT ALONE CAN ONE DAY COMMAND  
A MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORATE OR AT LEAST BE-  
COME THE PREDOMINANT POLITICAL FORCE TO WHICH  
OTHER GROUPINGS MUST RALLY;

- THE PCF REMAINS THE MOST PROBABLE COALITION  
PARTNER, BUT THERE IS LITTLE THE PS CAN DO TO  
CHANGE COMMUNIST BEHAVIOR, EXCEPT TO DEMONS-  
TRATE THROUGH CONTINUED SOCIALIST ELECTORAL  
SUCCESS THAT THE PCF MUST EITHER EVOLVE IN A  
MORE LIBERAL SENSE OR SLOWLY DISAPPEAR. HENCE  
THE ARGUMENT THAT A NEW BALANCE OF LEFT FORCES,  
E.G., A PS OVER 30 PERCENT AND THE PCF UNDER  
20 PERCENT, WILL FORCE THE COMMUNISTS TO  
PLAY BALL;

- IN THE INTERIM, PS AUTONOMY WILL NOT MEAN ANTI-  
COMMUNISM, BUT ONLY A REJECTION OF THE COMMU-  
NIST STYLE, AND WHAT THE SOCIALISTS CONSIDER ITS  
OUTMODED AND SIMPLISTIC MARXIST JARGON AND ITS  
UNREALISTIC PROGRAMMATIC EXTREMES. INDEED, THE  
PS WILL CONTINUE TO HONOR THE TRADITIONAL GROUND  
RULES OF LEFT UNITY IN ELECTORAL CONTESTS AND  
EXPECTS THE PCF TO DO LIKEWISE;

- AUTONOMY ALSO EXCLUDES ANY COLLABORATION WITH  
THE MAJORITY, ALTHOUGH A STRONGER PS COULD  
POSSIBLY ACCEPT THE SUPPORT OF THOSE MAJORITY  
ELEMENTS WHICH MIGHT RALLY TO THE SOCIALIST

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PROGRAM.

4. SUCH A SOCIALIST STRATEGY REQUIRES A FAITH IN THE  
FUTURE WHICH SOME OBSERVERS CONSIDER UNREALISTIC, PARTI-  
CULARLY WHEN THE PS ASSUMES THAT A RELATIVELY WEAKER

PCF WOULD PLAY BALL, WHEN IN THE 1978 ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN A RELATIVELY STRONGER PCF (VIS-A-VIS THE PS) WOULD NOT. OTHERS ARGUE THAT THE PS IS "INEVITABLY" PUSHED TOWARD THE CENTER: THAT THE PS IS A PARTY OF GOVERNMENT WHICH MUST GOVERN OR FADE AWAY, A FRAGILE ELECTORAL COALITION, TORN BY FACTIONAL RIVALRIES, WHOSE ONLY REAL CEMENT IS THE PROSPECT OF POWER. THE COMMUNISTS ARE INHERENTLY UNRELIABLE, THE ARGUMENT CONTINUES, AND THUS THE PS WILL ULTIMATELY BE FORCED TOWARD THE CENTER, AFTER DEFEAT IN 1981 OR AT LATEST AFTER THE NEXT LEGISLATIVE TEST IN 1983.

5. MUCH OF THE SPECULATION CONCERNING PS FRAGILITY RESULTS FROM THE ONGOING MITTERRAND - ROCARD COMPETITION FOR THE SOCIALIST PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY IN 1981. THAT CONTEST IS IN FACT JUST PICKING UP SPEED AND PROMISES TO BECOME ROUGHER BEFORE IT IS RESOLVED. BUT THIS CLASH OF PERSONALITIES, GENERATIONS AND AMBITIONS (WHICH IS UPDATED IN SEPTEL) SHOULD NOT OBSCURE THE CENTRAL FACT THAT BOTH MAJOR CONTENDERS (AS WELL AS OTHER INFLUENTIAL SOCIALISTS FROM PIERRE MAUROY THROUGH CERES LEADER JEAN-PIERRE CHEVENEMENT) AGREE ON THE GENERAL THRUST OF PS STRATEGY, EVEN THOUGH THEY OFTEN DIFFER ON THE FINE-TUNING OF PARTY POLICY. MOST IMPORTANTLY, BOTH MITTERRAND AND ROCARD, FOR ALL THEIR DIFFERENCES, SHARE COMMON AND DEEP CONCERN OVER THE PROBABLE IMPACT OF ANY SOCIALIST - GISCARDIAN ALLIANCE: IN RETURN FOR SEVERAL YEARS IN POWER UNDER GISCARD'S TUTELAGE, DURING WHICH NOT ALL THAT MUCH WOULD CHANGE, THE PS (THEY FEAR) WOULD ONCE AGAIN BE REDUCED TO A 20 PERCENT PARTY, DISCREDITED ON THE LEFT TO THE BENEFIT OF THE PCF, INDISTINGUISHABLE  
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FROM OTHER REFORMIST, CENTRIST PARTIES ON THE RIGHT, AND RELEGATED ONCE AGAIN TO A MINOR ROLE FOR YEARS TO COME.

6. OBVIOUSLY, MITTERRAND AND ROCARD HAVE SET THEIR SIGHTS MUCH HIGHER. NOT ONLY DO THEY HAVE AN IDEOLOIL POINT OF VIEW (WITNESS ESPECIALLY ROCARD'S 30 YEARS IN THE LEFT) WHICH LEADS THEM TO BELIEVE THAT FRENCH SOCIETY NEEDS FAR MORE FUNDAMENTAL REFORMS THAN THOSE NOW IN POWER WILL EVER ACCEPT. BUT THEY ALSO BELIEVE THAT TIME IS ON THEIR SIDE. THE PS HAS GROWN CONSTANTLY SINCE 1971 AND CAN LEGITIMATELY EXPECT ONE DAY TO CRACK THE 30 PERCENT BARRIER; THE PCF IS EVEN NOW FACING THE MOST SERIOUS INTERNAL DISSENT IT HAS KNOWN FOR AT LEAST A

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DIA WASHDC  
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW  
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DECADE, A SITUATION EXACERBATED BY DECLINING ELECTORAL  
FORTUNE. THE SOCIALISTS ALSO BELIEVE THEIR STRATEGY IS  
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FEASIBLE. AS PS NUMBER TWO PIERRE MAUROY RECENTLY

POINTED OUT, THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC ARE SUCH THAT A PARTY WITH OVER ONE-THIRD OF THE POPULAR VOTE CAN EXERCISE A DISPROPORTIONATELY GREATER POLITICAL POWER, AS WITNESSED BY YEARS OF GAULLIST RULE BUILT ON ONLY 35 PERCENT POPULAR SUPPORT.

7. BASED ON OUR CONTACTS WITH ALL FACTIONS OF THE PS, WE CONCLUDE:

- THAT THE PS IS NOT AT ALL TEMPTED BY THE PROSPECTS OF A SOCIALIST-GISCARDIAN ALLIANCE AND NOT LIKELY TO BE FOR YEARS TO COME;
- THAT THERE IS A FUNDAMENTAL CONSENSUS WITHIN THE SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP AND AMONG PARTY MEMBERS ON PS STRATEGY AS CURRENTLY DEFINED;
- AND THAT THIS STRATEGY LIKEWISE SATISFIES BY FAR THE LARGER PART OF THE SOCIALIST ELECTORATE, THUS PROVIDING A SOLID POLITICAL RATIONALE FOR THE PARTY'S DECISION.

THUS GISCARD MUST BE CONSIDERED WISE IN CHOOSING TO MOVE CAUTIOUSLY ON THE "OPENING" FRONT AT A TIME WHEN ITS PROSPECTS ARE BLEAK AND WHEN IN SO DOING HE RISKS DAMAGING HIS OWN UDF AS WELL AS MAJORITY COHESIVENESS.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Draft Date:** 20 jan 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Subject:** THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND THE PROCESS O "OPENING"  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
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